on being ill

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on being ill

by orphan_account

Summary

Hannibal has this boy in his hands. This boy with a glowing mind that might worsen as the year turns.

Chapter 1

It wasn't as though his life was his own. Hannibal could've swept it away, left the sand to its fate or tidied up the remains but this boy, this boy. His blood. But not really. Will Graham is 8 and he wants to be 15 and he roams the house in fancy clothing with a great great tongue. He speaks as though he has forever and is quite good at thinking, at being anything other than his age.

It's a calming thing to know the hands that keep him right. He walks into a room, almost tripping into a dead body and his eyes don't shift. Like fear is something far away from him. Like everything Hannibal does is- it's art wrapped up in the disguise of fear and when Will dismisses it Hannibal says, "Be careful not to step on the blood."

It's odd to others, he thinks. Hannibal never lets him touch dead flesh, never allows him to participate in the smallest of ways. Though he makes food and proudly presents it and they always smile to each other. Their little secrets kept from the world. *My kin*. Will is adamant on being alive for Hannibal. Being made for him and it's time, always time that ruins things. "It doesn't even exist." He's burning into the carpet and sun is everywhere nowadays. Summer. Summer and it's noise outside, the chatter of insects and that hum of heat. "What doesn't?" Hannibal is sitting with a book in his hand. He's by the window, being watched, being ignored. Living in his own world till he looks down at Will on the floor carrying a face. A frown. He's burdened by something. "Time. It doesn't exist. Especially not here in this house. Not with you."

Hannibal looks at him. His eyes start to think and his fingers tap against his book, almost a count down till he speaks and says, "Do you want to leave the house? See the world?"

"I only want to be with you."

"That wont change."

No, it wont. Not with that string Will has made for them.

After moments of unsaid words between them, Hannibal still remains his gaze on Will. And Will, shying down at his hands, looks increasingly fragile. He's glass. He's always been glass. "Will. Why won't you go out?"

"I hate people."

"Most people hate people."

"Then I the most."

They both rest in their silence until the sun falls, and Will runs away carrying the light with him.

Will is always running.

Hannibal is always trying to catch him until he's caught and left with these words. These words that choke, and pull the little weight of him down. "You will leave. You will leave."

Hannibal doesn't know where he's gotten that fear from. Doesn't know much about Will these days. He knows how to hold him and whisper into his neck. Tell him warmly, and calm. Tell him with love. "Where would I go without you?"

Even if this was a dream, Will knew he couldn't be possible of making it up. His brain is wide, but his heart is still so short of everything. Knowledge and love. Both are like waves pulling and taking and returning dead things to the shore. Except the things returned, they're all alive in Wills shaking head. Hannibal is alive. Brings back the dead. Allows life. Allows Will to breathe and Will is laid back over the couches armrest, he's seeing the world in its opposite ways. He points his finger to the ceiling and says, with warmth in his heart, "You could kill me. But no. I'm alive. Because of you, Hannibal. You've kept me that way."

Hannibal is standing above him, looking at his face redden from being upside down for far too long. He's relaxed and amused and he places his hand on Will's chest. He breathes out like they share the same breath. "You've been that way for a long time now. Your head must hurt."

Will shakes his head. "No. It doesn't. Isn't it bed time? You put me to bed too early. I'll be 9 soon. Lets make it an hour later, okay?"

Hannibal nods.

"Mh. Good then. Carry me to bed."

It'll be an hour, then an hour after that. Will sleeplessly roams through his life, steps on blood and bathes in it. Gets Hannibal mad and angry and makes him love. Will falls to the ground. A silent tantrum. A child, but almost. Will has nightmares. Will is eating raw flesh and gets no sleep, no sleep, no sleep. He gets no sleep till he's a cloud left lonely in the sky. Hannibal tells him to swallow a pill but he's too afraid to. *What if I choke?* He's been seeing things. Like himself in the mirror. Normal and undistorted but things only become distorted when the mirror carries the truth, and he. The walking lie.

Don't leave, Hannibal.

You need to sleep. You're becoming unwell.

Unwell. Unwell. That word rings on and on like bells chiming to the edge of the world, and the thoughts that he doesn't say are perhaps the most damaging. *Isn't that us?*

Unwell? The words keep pouring in, and he has seen Hannibal. The emotion he carries. He has seen his hands shake when he picks up a glass. Or how his fingers gate over his eyes, how he sighs so greatly. Hannibal whispers when he thinks Will cant hear. "Where did you get your mind from? You remarkable boy. You.."

His hand is on Wills forehead, listening to him sleep. Listening to this rare moment. But, feeling all this heat built up inside of him and feeling him sicken and worsen and *this mind, this boy*. What disaster the two of them have found themselves in. Inside this house of marble and gold, of paintings spanning out through hallways. Of murals gazing down upon them as they walk through the glow of reflection. Silver. Silvering. There is a masterpiece depicting the aftermath of gods wrath. The one Wills always asked out. "The land looks burnt. Barren. And the people."

"Dead and gone."

"We're immortal, aren't we?"

Hannibal will kiss his head and say it again and again, till this little boy becomes tired of noise. "We are. We are."

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There is crying. Crying? It is echoing off the walls and being so discreet. Vague, almost. Will shakes Hannibal, takes him from his sleep. "Someones crying." When Hannibal turns around he's faced with a shadowed Will, a Will with a big curly head of hair and his eyes, innocent and always florescent in the moonlight. Hannibal sits up, tells Will to sit too. "Will," He places his hand on his cheek and Will doesn't want to do anything but focus on the feeling of being touched. "there is no one crying."

"Just listen."

He does. They both sit across one another in this ruining darkness. And while Will listens, he stares at the panels of light the moon has left them.

"Will, there's-"

"Sh. Don't speak. It's there."

Will will spend his nights listening in on silence, and he'll sit here with Hannibal too. Hannibal who is considerate enough to lie.

"I hear it."

"You do!"

"What shall we do now?"

"Stay up with me? I can't sleep with it. I need company."

It hurts Hannibal. The way Will looks, all deranged and dark under his eyes and his hair in every direction. His speech, slurred and much younger sounding. And this situation. Something is there, something isn't there. Will is venturing off into his own different world and Hannibal is staying put, Hannibal doesn't want him to leave.

"Alright, open the lights. We'll stay awake."

It's the rush of doing absolutely nothing that makes Will feel settled. He's just sitting. Just sitting. And when Hannibal stares at him he stares back with his eyes that could break the Earth in half.

It's all so dark.

Tired. Warm. Calm. Will doesn't say anything about the quiet. But he does start to crawl to Hannibal. Hannibal takes him and sets him on his lap, lets his head rest against his chest. "Is it gone?" He asks.

He feels Will nod.

"Can I sleep with you? I miss you."

Hannibal chuckles, "You see me everyday."

"Yes, but even if you see someone everyday their company can be so big that when you're not with them..something is missing."

"I'm glad I can be that for you."

"Would you be sad if I left?"

"Left where?"

"Just left."

Hannibal has a puzzled look on his face and it's only when he holds Wills face and makes him turn, that Will sees. Sees him. Sees him so Hannibal can make him understand once and for all.

"Yes, yes of course I'd miss you. I couldn't spend a day without you. But, you wont go anywhere. And I wont."

There was, perhaps, a crash. A cymbal going off somewhere faraway. Or a change in the oxygen. Because Will nods and smiles and agrees but something has changed. Some light in his eyes, now dimly lit, covered, contained, contaminated. Hannibal feels this like he feels Will in his arms. Clear as anything can be.

They spend the night sleeping together. Will wakes a couple of times and moves around, he walks over to the window, sees the outside, goes back into bed and clutches Hannibals shirt in his little fist. He goes to sleep, more hours than he ever has this past month.

And it makes him well

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He realizes fractions of his past are just images from dreams. And that he doesn't exist before or during the dreams. It's just now. Present. And he read in a book somewhere that people are always worrying about their future, that's why the world is mad. That's why the world is mad mad mad. That's not why you're mad.

"That's not why you're mad."

"What?"

Hannibal has him by the wrist, his grip tight. His face. The most angry Wills ever witnessed and he hasn't seen much of Hannibal giving emotion that isn't hidden by something else. This time it's transparent.

"You can hear."

"Why am I mad then? Can you not understand? You don't do this!"

He raises Wills arm.

It's been bandaged already. Red cleaned and cleaned off.

"In the movies, people get angry sometimes because they were scared."

"Don't learn from movies."

"There's some reality in them!"

"Don't yell."

"Don't, don't, don't."

Hannibal gives him a look, lets go of his hand and lets Will sit on the counter without anyone to look at. Now that Hannibal has turned around, given his back to him. Will sees it though. His frustration. His hands sliding down his face. So many things Will makes him feel.

"I'm sorry."

Hannibal doesn't say anything. Doesn't react.

"I'm sorry, I said. You should forgive me. It's what people do."

Hannibal doesn't say anything.

"Please," He can hear the crack in Wills voice. "Hannibal, don't be angry.." How inferior he sounds. Hopeless. Flesh and bone reduced to emotion. Something as human as anything and Hannibal is something far more extraordinary. At least to Will. Will who's on the verge of whatever tipping point he's at.

"I need you.."

"Will," Hannibal turns, shows his face, makes everything around them combust into dust. Makes the light bend and merge into them. Makes Will..start a riot in his heart.

"I'm ruining you."

"No, no, not that."

"If you were in an ordinary household, with a family.."

"Hannibal! No, no, no, no, no, no. Stop talking. You- you know that is something I would never want."

"What do you want? Hm? You're hurting yet you say I make you happy. You can't sleep. You're hallucinating. You speak so bleakly about things. What happiness do you have here?"

A pause.

"Hannibal, i'm in love with you."

Hannibal looks at him. And it's harsh. Whatever is between them, Will can't understand it. He can't form a conclusion, even when Hannibal laughs, and his heart breaks. "You think you are positive on what love feels like?"

"It's exasperating."

"You aren't positive."

"I know..how..I feel..." His voice is small and breaking, and his throat burns with the effort he makes into saying it. There's a moment in the air where he feels something settle, then ignite, where he feels the uncertainty radiating off the other man.

Hannibal storms out the room, leaving Will left on the cold counter to cry himself blind.

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During this march Will is determined to continue, stomping around the library with his arms kept to himself and his fingers— a shaking, wobbling mess, he hears Hannibal walk across the corridor and into the kitchen. He stays, wondering in his place, being so incredibly aware of the person in the other room. There's nothing else to do but lather in this awful sensation of anxiety and love and he's always known that those come hand in hand. Always, one compliments the other.

When he realizes he's spent 10 minutes listening in on Hannibal getting ready for dinner, he steps out of the room and stares at the entrance way, that hollow doorless gateway to the kitchen that he's always ran so carelessly through. When he steps in further, he sees Hannibal

staring blankly at the running sink, completely unfocused, yet he hears or rather senses Will enter and there's a momentary glance. Then back again to the sink. "Care for dinner? You don't eat much nowadays." He says this calmly, almost bored, almost tired. Will doesn't know what to pin down, only that Hannibal has this gloom over him that perhaps he's had for a long time. This toll Will has over him. This exhaustion over keeping him right. It's finally showing.

"I'd like to eat." Will says, and climbs over to one of the bar stools to watch Hannibal work. "You look.." Will tries to catch a word, "..grimm."

"Do I?" Hannibal manages out a small chuckle and keeps the remaining smile on his face. Will thinks it suits him but doesn't speak any further, even though he has lots to say. Whether it's useless chatter or something important. The dip in the landscape of them is far to large to ignore and Will knows he'll have to speak soon, of it. Of what has been building.

Hannibal, now looking better than he did when Will found him, turns the tap off and cleans his hands. "Were you cleaning the sink?"

"I was. I like things clean before I cook."

Will mindlessly slides his index finger against the counter he's leaned his chest up against, and flicks nothing into the air. "Everything is always so clean."

There was no awkwardness in the air, this silence was something usual between them. And the need to fill it was something usual to Will. But the clumsiness Hannibal has found himself in, was indeed not normal, or usual, nor an everyday thing. While turning for a towel to dry his hands, Hannibal knocked off a glass sitting on the counter, a glass he had forgotten to wash. The sudden crash did not cause either of them to flinch.

"Hm." Will vocalised, and tried to lean over to see the debris. "You've never broken a glass before. Or. Anything."

"Yes, I know."

"Need some help?"

"I'm fine, Will. There's no need to stay here. Dinner will take a while."

"Now you're angry with me."

Hannibal turns to meet his eye, and it startles Will for a second.

"I am not."

"I should've never told you. You're supposed to know how to act. How do you think this makes me feel? You made me so frustrated. Did you know? You're supposed to know how to act!"

"Will, I-"

"Why would you just leave? You're- you're-" Will breathed heavily, and frankly, looked like he was panicking. "You're not supposed to do that. You aren't. You know everything.. You knew..you knew that would..make me.."

"Will, calm down."

"make me angry..and- frustrated. And- and- sad. And- and-"

Will tried to take big breathes but was interrupted as he couldn't take them in long enough. It was short and jagged and Hannibal suspected he was having an panic attack. He walked around the counter, stepping onto the glass, and over to where Will sat, completely watery eyed and breathless. "Hannibal-" he said, quick and worried as he realized he couldn't breathe. His hands started to reach up to his throat and began to softly scratch at his skin. "I can't-"

"Will, will. Look at me," he held both sides of Wills head and forced him to look into his eyes. Hannibals eyes which reminded him of so many warm and calming things. "Open your mouth, and try to breathe out from your nose. Calm down. Calm down." Hannibal rested his hand on Wills chest. "Listen to me. Will. You need to calm down."

Hannibal could see the hurried and desperate look on Wills small face, and Will couldn't do anything but look back at him. He was calming down. He was loosing himself. Loosing himself in Hannibal that had both hands on him. Except, this time it had occurred so sharply to him that he was looking at Hannibal so very differently than the way Hannibal was looking at him.

"Very good, Will. Breathe out slowly."

"You're-"

"Don't speak."

Will over exaggeratedly furrowed his brows in disapproval. Similarly to the way a toddler unknowingly does so and causes laughter among his parents. Hannibal smiles at that, and runs his hand across Wills hair, leaving behind the wetness that still clung onto him. "You need a cut."

Will had still been breathing harshly but nonetheless was breathing without the coldness of panic. "I like..my hair."

"It's getting long."

After a few moments of silence, Will takes a deep breath and says,
"I know I'm a child. And..that..you cannot reciprocate. I am fine. With that."

"You don't seem like the sort to settle for unrequited love."

"I'm eight. I guess I'm forced to settle."

Will finds his eyes wondering to the floor, and speaks again once he's no longer looking at Hannibal, no longer attached to that pulling gravity he lazily ignores. "But..you know..it would be nice if you-"

"I apologize for leaving after, I'm assuming, your incredibly difficult confession." Hannibal interrupted, knowing exactly what Will was trying to say. "What you are feeling, it must have taken a gigantic toll on you. And I believe you know what love feels like. Though, someone your age mustn't ever face that."

"You never say that about murder."

"Your sleepless nights..I assumed they were connected to my.. activities... I wanted to say something."

"They weren't. Murder to me is something as ordinary as birds in the sky."

"It doesn't phase you as disturbing?"

"Does it to you?"

"No, it doesn't."

"Me neither. I wonder who raised me."

"I found you at six, Will."

"Two years can make a big difference."

"Hm, I suppose."

"Hannibal."

"Yes?"

Will paused. He looked at Hannibal, closely, being incredibly aware of who this man was as he stood before him, and all that he felt was the knawing ache of happiness at someone elses existence. He parted his lips and begun speaking. Each word hurt.

"You could have feelings for me though. Couldn't you? No one knows I exist. No one would know about it."

Hannibal sighed. He didn't think he would need to have this conversation.

"Will, you are a child. It's wrong."

Will begun to laugh. "What? Morally? Wrong doesn't stop you from murder and cannibalism."

"You are inexperienced in life, Will."

"I'm no ordinary eight year old."

"You sound ridiculous. Again, Will, you are eight. I have no romantic feelings towards you."

"Okay," a pause. "what about sexual—"

"Will."

"Hannibal....I'm equal to an 18 year old."

"You are not."

"Okay, I'll learn more things."

"The only way to be 18 is to be 18. Even if you were, I would not engage you."

"What? Am I like a son to you? No," Will crosses his arms and turns his head, "we are acquaintances from now on. I hope you'll respect the barriers this leaves us in."

"You truly are an eight year old."

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In the days after rolling out, the sun lifting and rising as quick as the time turns, things become much more better. Hannibal likes to pick him up with a great deal of strength, a tease, and it isn't like there is weight in his hands. Will, the skinny boy, the paper boy. He sweats at night but smiles in the morning. He tilts his head to the pillows he's lined up and offers them advice. Lonely is the word that surfaces when Hannibal catches a glimpse of his hospitality. Adorable. Isn't it? There is a speck of worry, then a spark. A twinkle twinkle little star. Will is a child that has never spoken to another child. Where are the nursery rhymes to be learned? Where is Hannibal? Hannibal?

It got better then worse.

Hello, sun. Hello, water. Hello, the the ringing. Why do you hide in the quiet?

Perhaps he needed to learn his ABC's through singing. Or refrain from observing murder. He needed to clean the blood off his shoes, needed to scrub them to metal and wood so the dark things don't find him. So they don't take Hannibal away. And to think this was his destiny.

"It was written that I meet you." Hannibal hears him mumble half asleep half awake.

It's a play. Those red curtains dancing against the window. Will is boyish and he moves, and runs, and he has a script in his mind. Yes. The sun *is* far too dim to be real.

Will catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror.

Where were you?

He leans against his reflection. He has to tip-toe to reach the sink. To wash his sinking face.

I never had you. You...innocence.

He finds bite marks on his skin, then forgets that that is bad to do.

Don't catch me.

Hannibal wants to ask him. Will wants to stay silent and only run around the house, listen to deafening music, listen to the weight of his heart beat. He insists on sleeping alone and Hannibal is worried. He sees the marks on his skin. Almost planned. Almost patterned. The canvas has been here expanding and Will cannot stop whispering on about things that don't exist. Things that don't get spoken about. Things that die in a short age. Maybe it is his longing to be one of them. Left in the wind to shed apart and be free. Hannibal finally sits him down, tells him. "Will. Again. Unwell."

Will and his eyes, they speak in two different languages. He hides his ear in his shoulder and grins an annoying pleased grin, one that seems like he has finished doing something mischievously inconvenient. "So I am."

"Will, please be serious. You cannot live like this."

"Like this?"

"Isolation."

"I'm with you. Always with you."

Hannibal caresses Wills cheek, makes him look directly at him.

"No. You can't live this way. You claim you are smart, yet you haven't seen the world. You haven't spoken to another life."

"I've spoken to you. That's all there is!"

Maybe it was the way his pupils were. Madness was crawling and Hannibal couldn't command him to shut his eyes, no, where is his equal in that? They were large, they took in a lot of light others would shy away from. Hannibal still attempted to speak, knowing the high pitched and angry answer.
"Will, lets travel somewhere."
"No!"

"You need to get out."
"No, no, no, no, no!"
"You want to be an adult yet you continue to carry yourself like a child! Continue to speak like one! We will go out. You cannot stay inside these walls for the rest of your life. What little life that may be."

Will recalls a movie, Harry Potter, shown almost every day on some irritatingly commercialized kids channel. The scar Harry had on his forehead would hurt at times and he reminded himself of it because his hands were hurting, the ones riddled with bite marks and bruises. The scars that he thought had gotten better. Better. That word doesn't mean anything now.
"They'll catch us." He says, and Hannibal straightens himself at that.
"Will..who will catch us?"
"Them. Them."

He doesn't point, doesn't even lift his hands or his head or his eyes. No. He falls towards Hannibal, into his arms, and he hears Hannibal whisper something into his ear. "If you love me, Will, then you would listen to me."

Chapter End Notes

Alright, the first chapter is something I wrote in February because I couldn't get Hannibal taking care of a small, slowly decending into madness, Will, out of my head and I wanted to write more about it so, this is how this happend.

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